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A Survey Aimed at Role and Importance of NonGovernmental Organizations in the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

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Abstract

Concept corporate social responsibility (CSR) has gained importance and popularity simultaneously with the rise of concept “sustainable development”. Business world has comprehended that sustainable development isn’t only field of interest of public sector and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) anymore, and in addition to their own financial sustainability they should go into action rapidly to take an active role in social progress and sources survivability. Here in multiple shareholders dialog and increase of sharing between actors are of capital importance. CSR and sustainable development are two in dissociable concepts anymore and it is obvious that providing sustainable development is impossible without an appropriate social responsibility approach to be developed by private sector. In parallel with these developments companies put into practice Corporate Social Responsibility Projects with a chosen NGO. Many foundations seeing the advantages of social responsibility projects has established their own associations and charitable organizations. Present situation in producing social responsibility projects and putting them into practice promise hope considerably for world future. In this sense the role and support of NGOs in social responsibility activities carried out in running have importance.

Keywords: Corporate Social Responsibility, NGOs,

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1. Introduction

Corporate social responsibility in recent years has attracted our attention as a remarkable subject in all over the world and in our country. CSR basically includes the role of businesses and non-governmental organizations that have sufficient economic resources -along with official organizations and countries- to cope with the social, political, economic and environmental problems which began with industrialization and increased up to now.

The concept of CSR has gained a simultaneous importance and popularity with the global rise of concept “sustainable development”. Business world has comprehended that sustainable development isn’t anymore the field of interest of only public sector and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and that in addition

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to their own financial sustainability they, too, should go into action rapidly to take an active role for the survivability of their sources. At this point now corporate social responsibility and sustainable development are two in dissociable concepts and there are various actors in this concept.

With the activities of CSR, today the concept of civil society has been focused on. The organizations now turn to such structures that find solutions to their own problems. Non-governmental organizations make it possible for organizations to carry out their CSR-oriented activities as social entities. It is inevitable that this structure which is such important for the individuals in the society is important also for the businesses. Because the businesses are important part of the society as much as of the economy. Businesses have important and effective positions in societies. In this connection, the issue of the views and relations of the businesses with civil society comes to the fore. Because the non-governmental organizations become an important part of social responsibility with the projects and activities they carry out and they affect the businesses in terms of social responsibility understanding. At the bottom of the establishment of social responsibility understanding at the businesses lie these interactions

1. Literature Review and Hypotheses

1.1. *The concept of corporate social responsibility*

Today, the facts that technology has progressed rapidly and that the expectations of the society changed have made it difficult to define the concept of social responsibility in a certain manner. The organizations operating in different fields of activity perceive and implement social responsibility in varying ways according to their priorities (Eren, 2010).

Social responsibility can be defined as devotion of the businesses to moral values while they fulfill their aims and their using their resources also for the development of the society they operate in. Another definition explains it the use of the economic activities by the businesses without damage to the employees, shareholders, consumers and the individuals in the society and the relevant production by the businesses in line with the wishes and desires of the society by using in the best way the scarce resources they have (Nalbant, 2005: 193).

Corporate social responsibility is a concept which means that organizations behave in an ‘ethical’ and ‘responsible’ way towards the companies, public institutions or non-governmental organizations that have been created with the aim of profit motives along with all the shareholders in their both internal and external environments, makes and implements decisions in this direction (Fisher, 2004: 391-392).

(Steurer, 2010:50) If we are to make a general definition, one made by European Union Commission is: “Corporate social responsibility is a concept wherein the businesses integrates their social and environmental concerns with business operations and shareholders via interactions based on voluntariness.” (Steurer, 2010:50).

Corporate social responsibility according to the definition of The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) requires that the businesses behave in a morally upright way towards the society, that the management know their responsibilities while regulating their relations with the shareholders and that they contribute to economic growth while raising the life quality of their employees, the families of their employees and in general the society (Bayraktaroğlu et al, 2009).

With their social purposed projects and cooperation with NGOs, the businesses where the understanding of social responsibility has been established are within the civil society structure. Some corporate businesses interact with NGOs and are able to contribute to the society by professionally creating projects regarding social responsibility. At this point the activities of corporate social responsibility and the effect of civil society corporations are of importance.

1.2. *Non-governmental organizations and relations with CSR*

Civil society can be defined as a togetherness field wherein the individuals do not accept state intervention, wherein the individuals have an organization that is based on voluntariness, wherein the individuals and groups determine their

destinies, which aims the maximum individual freedom, where the participation occurs at the highest level, wherein social, political, economic and cultural activities can be conducted in an organized way (Cicioğlu, 2011: 15).

Although they are often used to mean the same thing, civil society and non-governmental organization have different meanings. The concept of civil society includes within itself the definition of its members, NGOs. NGOs play an important role in social and political life and they are in an essential position for a democratic system. However there has not been any common definition made for those institutions which are the basic actors of civil society. The boundaries of the concept of NGO have not been definitely drawn up in either Western world where the concept came on the scene or in Turkey.

Mario Padron (quoted by Poggi 2001:38) defines non-governmental organizations as aid or benefit organizations and as organizations outside the government aiming growth and development. If one wants to explain the concept of non-governmental organizations in a simple way, the following expression can be used: independent organizations which operate relying on voluntariness, which do not seek profits, which have come together in an effort to announce or get rid of the needs of the society (Boran, 2011: 128).

While Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) helps the private sector be more competitive in international markets, helps the employees participate in labor processes more actively, helps protect the environment and helps develop the cooperation of society and private sector, it is also of vital importance in achieving success and in the realization of sustainable development. It is also worthy of consideration in that the individuals and organizations fulfill their responsibilities towards their social shareholders.

1.3. The role and importance of non-governmental organizations in CSR activities

With works to establish and meet the needs of the society, non-governmental organizations must be accepted as an important attraction center for those institutions seeking to realize corporate social responsibility projects. As they operate focusing usually on a specific place of work, the non-governmental organizations develop skills, knowledge, experience and equipment related with their fields as the time passes. This provides an important advantage for those institutions that are in cooperation with them. In actual fact, this process may as well be recognized as a process where there are mutual achievements. For instance, while the institution benefit from the organized force, field dominance, deep knowledge of social issues, prestige etc. of non-governmental organizations, so does the non-governmental organization provide benefits such as funds, professional man power, communication support etc. in order to realize its cause.

The facts that they do not have profit motives and that they work on a basis of voluntariness places them on an honorable position in the eyes of the society. Çabuk (2009: 16) states that there are 3 main features that all the non-governmental organizations share. These are being independent of the state, being independent of private sector, and the fact that the participation and the activities of the individuals are voluntary. One of the important activities of non-governmental organizations is the power of creating public opinion in advanced societies. Moreover, it is known that many powerful and influential international non-governmental organizations in the world sometimes have impact on both commercial and political lives.

Non-governmental organizations constitute an important position for many institutions which wish to make contact with their shareholders and which combine this desire of theirs with corporate social responsibility practices. If the institutions accept non-governmental organizations -which are themselves shareholders for the institutions- as important business partners with prestige and equipment that would shed light on their courses rather than seeing them as enemies, they may be able to increase their profit margins. Having taken a stand against the institutions in the area of social responsibility when necessary in the past, the non-governmental organizations may act in accordance with common purposes today in the same projects with those institutions the sincerity of which they notice. This in turn does ensure openings of dialogue channels between the society and the private sector.

As for the issue of how the institutions will come together with non-governmental organizations in practice, Çabuk has a suggestion. Dividing the relationship of companies with non-governmental organizations in three groups, Çabuk (2009: 17-18) names the first group as “charitable” stage. This group comprises of the donations which are, according

to Çabuk, the most traditional process. Another stage, the operational one, means the exchange of resources by the companies and non-governmental organizations within the framework of a specific activity. Reason-oriented marketing or sponsorship practices go into this cooperation stage. As for the “integrative” stage, the third one, there is a mutual interaction. At this stage the missions, human resources and activities of both the companies and the non-governmental organizations experience more collective actions and organizational integration. The author includes the cooperation between the companies and non-governmental organizations in corporate social responsibility works in this third stage. Institutions need to keep in touch with a lot of different shareholder groups in the process wherein they are active. Non-governmental organizations, one of the parts of these groups, will also be an important source of esteem when the communication is governed in a correct manner. Not only the institutions but also the organizations and the society benefit from these strategic steps taken in order to profit from the social acceptance of the socially-accepted and approved non-governmental organizations and to strengthen their prestige. Thus this cooperation provides profits for the both sides. The institutions not only strengthen their prestige but also increase the morale and motivations of their employees by earning the confidence of their shareholders. In addition to this, it gets easier for the institutions which are associated with and which comes to the fore with social issues to enter into new areas and reach a target group. Non-governmental organizations also benefit from this cooperation. First of all, as they are able to guarantee their financial sustainability, they are able to work with a more professional staff and be governed more professionally. What is more, due to the contacts and the economic power of the institutions they are able to enter the agenda of the media much easily, thus increasing their recognition (Boran, 2011: 130).

In our country, it is seen that there are exemplary institutions which adopt and implement the understanding of corporate social responsibility in every way. However, when the corporate social responsibility are evaluated from the viewpoint of its global scope and dimensions it would not be wrong to say that the practices in our country are still at the beginning stage in terms of prevalence and content. In Turkey, corporate social responsibility take the shape of those projects that are developed under the leadership of the companies as an extension of advertising and public relations activities of non-governmental organizations but not as a response to the demand and pressure of non-governmental organizations as a social shareholder of the company (Van Het Hof, 2009: 155).

Contrary to what is expected, it is the companies that invite the non-governmental organizations to work together in social responsibility projects. Three interlocking reasons can be said to exist that influence the companies in Turkey to undertake corporate social responsibility activities without the pressure of non-governmental organizations, one of the important social shareholders. Before all else, globally increasing competition forces the companies to be active in activities outside their traditional commercial activities in order to get relative advantage (Göçenoğlu and Girgin, 2005: 7). The pressures coming from the multinational companies' social shareholders from the countries where their headquarters exist have caused those multinational companies to pay attention to their corporate social responsibility projects also in developing countries such as Turkey where they invest and this has carried the understanding of corporate social responsibility also into the agenda of domestic private sector in the countries under consideration. In the second place, corporate social responsibility takes up an important place among the criterion that Turkey need to meet in Turkey's EU harmonization process. If Turkish companies cannot reach European Union standards in respect of corporate social responsibility, it will be impossible for them to be included in European market (Michael and Öhlund, 2005). At the same time, also the civil society dialogue, which forms one of the legs of the negotiation proves continuing between Turkey and European Union, has ensured the development of non-governmental organizations thanks to the opportunities it has provided. The last reason for which the companies in Turkey move towards corporate social responsibility activities is public regulations. The fact that Capital Markets Board published in parallel with the regulations of OECD the Principles of Corporate Governance which the Board determined in 2003 and revised in 2005 and that the Capital Markets Board imposed an obligation on the companies to release corporate governance compliance reports in order for the shareholders to be aware of to what extent the companies adopt these principles compel the companies to take corporate social responsibility activities more seriously (Van Het Hof, 2009: 155). With reference to the conclusion that the development of corporate social responsibility practices in Turkey depend mostly on external and corporate effects and pressures, it can be said that corporate social responsibility practices in Turkey progress under the guidance of and with the superiority of mainly the companies.

2. Methodology

2.1. Research Goal

The aim of this study is to investigate the role and importance of the non-governmental organizations in the development of corporate social responsibility understanding of the institutions and to reach a general evaluation about the role and contributions of the non-governmental organizations in those businesses that are leader in corporate social responsibility activities.

2.2. Sample and Data Collection

A quantitative research method has been employed in the study. Related to the purpose of the study, the corporate social responsibility works of the businesses that are leader in CSR activities and the activities of non-governmental organizations in the realization of these works have been examined with content analysis in respect to the elements in the websites of those businesses under consideration within the scope of CSR.

In this regard, big private sector businesses in CAPITAL 500 list make up the target population of the study while the sample is made up of 20 big businesses determined with the traditional research of Capital magazine, “Social Responsibility Leaders of Turkey- 2011” out of Capital 500 companies.

Table 1. The CSR Activities of Firms and the NGO Relations

Company	CSR WEB SITE	POLICY OF CSR	CSR REPORT	CSR-NGO RELATIONS				
				Nature Environment	Education	Health	Culture Art	Projects
Sabancı Holding	Yes	Yes	No	Tema Foundation	Sabancı Foundation		Sabancı Foundation	
Turkcell	Yes	Yes	Yes	Tema Foundation				-Türkiye Kumbarası -Kardelenler -Gönül Köprüsü -Genç Beynlere Destek -Geleceğe Koşanlar
Koç Holding	Yes	Yes	Yes	Tema Foundation			Vehbi Koç Foundation	-Meslek Lisesi Memleket Meselesi
Yıldız Holding	Yes	Yes	No	Tema Foundation				-Herkes İçin Futbol -Ülker Sinema Şenliği -El Koyun Projesi
Arçelik	Yes	Yes	Yes	Tema Foundation	TEGV ¹ AÇEV ² ÖSGD ³		Vehbi Koç Foundation	-Eğitimde Gönül Birliği
Sanko Holding	Yes	Yes	No		SKV ⁴ AÇEV			
Teknosa	Yes	Yes	No	ÇEVKO ⁵				-Nadir Eserler Projesi
ETİ	Yes	Yes	No	ÇEKÜL ⁶ WWF Türkiye				-Eti Çekül Kültür Elçileri -Eti Çocuk Vapuru -Eti Çocuk Tiyatrosu -Konya Havzası Sulama Projesi -Türkiye'nin Yarınları
ENKA	Yes	Yes	No		Enka Foundation		EKSD	
İş Bankası	Yes	Yes	No		TEGV			-81 İlde 81 Orman -Karneni Göster Kitabını Al
Eczacıbaşı Topluluğu	Yes	Yes	Yes		TEV ⁷ TEGV	TAPV ¹⁰	İKSV ⁸ İKSEV ⁹	-Hijyen Projesi
Coca Cola	Yes	Yes	Yes		Hayata Artı V.	Aktif Yaşam Derneği		-Çık Dışarıya Oynayalım -Mucit Yarışması
Boydak H.	Yes	Yes	No		BEKV ¹¹			
AVEA	Yes	Yes	No	Tema Foundation		Fiziksel Engelliler Vakfı		-Türkiye'nin Minikleri Dünyanın Yıldızları
VESTEL	Yes	Yes	No		Mehmet Zorlu Vakfı			-Vestel Türk Atletizmin Yanında
Doğan Holding ^a	Yes	Yes	No		ADV AÇEV ÇYDD ¹² TUKD ¹³ AÇEV	Türkiye Aile Sağlığı Planlama Foundation		-Baba Beni Okula Gönder -Aile İçi Şiddete Son
AKBANK	Yes	Yes	No					-Düşünme Gücü
EFES PİLSEN								-Mavi Buluşmalar
GARANTİ	Yes	Yes	No	WWW Türkiye ¹⁴	ÖRAV ¹⁵ TOG ¹⁶			-Deniz Yıldızları

^a Dogan Media ranked 17th Dogan Holding is a joint CSR work order, although not included in the table.

¹Turkish Education Volunteers Foundation

²Mother Child Education Foundation

³Corporate Volunteer Association

⁴Sani Konukoğlu Foundation

⁵Environmental Protection and Packaging Waste Recovery and Recycling Trust

⁶The Foundation for the Protection and Promotion of the Environment and Cultural Heritage

⁷Turkish Educational Foundation

⁸Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts

⁹İzmir Foundation for Culture Arts and Education

¹⁰Turkish Family Health and Planning Education

¹¹Boydak Education and Culture Foundation

¹²Support for Modern Life Association

¹³Turkish Association of University Women

¹⁴Turkish State Environment Agency to Subsidize Organic Farming

¹⁵Teacher Academy Foundation

¹⁶Community Volunteers Foundation

2.3. Analyses and Results

In the table above there are the CSR activities of 19 business and relationships with NGO. As the business in the research are those business which are the leaders of social responsibility of Turkey, all of these business have CSR policies and websites related with CSR. Yet it is seen that CSR reports do not exist in most of these businesses. These reports give detailed information about and lead the way towards the practices and projects of business conducted towards CSR.

In all of the business within the scope of the research, it is seen that NGOs have been cooperated in various areas. The majority of the businesses that are active in holdings have foundations of their own and they perform their activities via those foundations. When the cooperation areas with CSR and NGO are examined, it is seen that the cooperation has been performed mainly in the area of education. While the cooperations in other areas take place in mostly one NGO, it is seen that educational cooperations are much richer. While no cooperation between CSR and NGO in sports is discovered in the business subject to the research, CSR activities in this field take place mostly through sponsorship. Activities in culture and arts are carried out mainly with the holdings' own foundations and the holdings support the culture and art activities through sponsorships. Sponsorship works are appraised as a public relations activity and while sponsorships are realized in education mostly by granting scholarships and building schools, in environment and culture & art, the sponsorships are available in providing venues.

It is seen that the projects conducted by the majority of the business subject to our research appeared extensively in written and visual media and in social media, and that in this sense the businesses have been in a firm cooperation with media. In this regard, most of the businesses each have one project, mainly in education

3. Conclusion

It is important that the CSR Baseline for Turkey has been published as an output of the activities conducted with the target groups and the foreign business visits during the Acceleration Project of Corporate Social Responsibility in Turkey carried out by the Corporate Social Responsibility Association of Turkey and Corporate Social Responsibility within the scope of Development Program of Civil Society Dialogue, one

of the legs of negotiation process performed between Turkey and European Union. In Turkey Corporate Social Responsibility Baseline Report, the matters discussed with long and short term proposals are the increase of competitiveness among companies in Turkey, the prevalence of CSR reporting, suggestions towards media and public sector and also subjects pertaining to the performance of researches on the conceptual dimension of CSR in Turkey.

In this direction, one of the conclusions arrived as a result of the research carried out is that the cooperation with non-governmental organizations provides great convenience for the institutions. The competences of NGOs towards their fields, the experiences they have had and their dominance in the field provide advantages for the institutions. It has been concluded that the businesses have positive perceptions in this regard and that they support these perceptions also in concrete activities. It is seen that the same situation has appeared also in their directing their employees towards voluntary works. The prestige of NGOs should also be evaluated in a vital way for the adoption and implementation of the conducted projects by social shareholders. It should not be forgotten that the social responsibility projects of the institutions support the establishment aims of NGOs.

The corporate social responsibility activities of the businesses are oriented towards providing social benefits. Businesses that have positive perceptions towards civil society shape their corporate social responsibility activities around this perception of theirs. The direction of the social responsibility activities by the businesses towards the elements of civil society indicates the importance they place in civil society. The businesses must show the importance they give to civil society and its organized structures, the NGOs, in concrete works. The development of NGOs in society and the moral and material support given to them makes the society make progress. The support given by businesses to NGOs is quite important in the solution of social problems and in the development of societies.

One of the conclusions reached is that the companies in Turkey notice their roles of grantor and supporter for NGOs day by day. However, in their partnerships with NGOs they need to move to partnerships with a strategic and continued nature, rather than sponsorships just for once. Furthermore, more encouraging tax reductions towards donations should be brought for the companies and the companies should encourage their employees to participate in NGOs as volunteers and members. For this, some legal arrangements are necessary. The most important point is that NGOs and private sector institutions should not see themselves as just project partners and they should discuss matters of social and economic development together in order to get more long term results.

It is seen that as all of the companies dealt with in the research are big companies, they have developed their own projects. Even though these companies make common projects with NGOs they are in a position to direct CSR works. This situation may be taken as useful in terms of CSR projects being harmonious with company aims and as restrictive in terms of the development and freedom of NGOs. Big companies prefer to work big NGOs such as TEMA while carrying out common projects. However, companies may create partnerships also with small NGOs that do its job well such as AÇEV and ÖSGD and within the scope of projects these NGOs are able to get the necessary staff ready by trainings or temporary employments when necessary. Consequently, expertise and flexibility can be seen as alternatives for NGOs of possessing criteria.

Cases taken up specifically within Turkey reflect the viewpoints of NGOs on CSR and show various cooperation types. The processes followed and the structures formed show diversity in the same environment and all the works are seen sometimes as small or big steps towards the development of civil society and the solution social problems. As the sample that has been focused in this analysis is a small one, the data will not represent the entire country but they will still give an opinion. The future researches are recommended to aim to present to the interested parties the big picture in Turkey. As so many successful examples that continue their works in international standards but are not allowed for due to the restrictive dimensions of the research inspire and guide civil society and private sector with their descriptions in different platforms, it is guessed that the variety of company- NGO cooperation will increase day by day.

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